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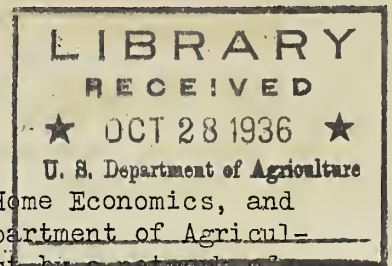
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HOUSEHOLD CALENDAR

Managing the Refrigerator



A dialogue between Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, and Mr. Morse Salisbury, Radio Service, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 48 associate NBC stations, Thursday, July 23, 1936.

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MR. SALISBURY: This being Thursday I know the women listening in today are expecting to hear from Ruth Van Deman. She's right here at the microphone across the table, all ready she tells me to pass along some cooling news. That's certainly the kind we're needing this month, Ruth.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Well, the other day when the mercury was hovering around the 100 degree mark, I thought it was a good time to go down and call at the laboratory where Mildred Porter is making studies on refrigerators. Thought I might pick up some suggestions from her about managing the refrigerator to make it give the most efficient service this hot weather.

MR. SALISBURY: Well, Ruth, I'd like to know how much more ice or electric current one can reasonably expect to have to use to keep the refrigerator cold in a hot spell such as we've just been having. Did you ask Miss Porter about that?

MISS VAN DEMAN: That's one of the very first questions I asked her. Yes, she had some very interesting figures to show exactly how much ice is melted or current used, when the room is average temperature and when it's very warm. But before she gave them to me she led me into the constant temperature rooms where she is making the tests just to give me a little background, she said. The first room we stepped into was 70 degrees, day and night, the other 90 degrees. Each room is filled with rows of refrigerators, some cooled with ice, some by mechanical units.

Now, I'm not going to quote all the figures that Miss Porter gave me on ice meltage and kilowatt hours per day. They're too complicated to explain on the air. But they amounted to this:

It took 50 per cent more ice or electric current, that is half again as much, to keep the refrigerators cold when the temperature of the room was 90 degrees as compared with it at 70 degrees. And in spite of using more ice or more electric current, the temperature inside the refrigerators wasn't so cold. For instance, the temperature in the ice-cooled box stayed around 50 degrees when the room was very hot, as against 45 degrees when the room temperature was normal. And you know 45 degrees is considered a much better temperature than 50 degrees for storing perishable foods.

MR. SALISBURY: Then I take it that a wise householder looks over his house and chooses the coolest place possible for his refrigerator.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Quite so. If he wants to save operating expense and food. And also he finds out if he can where the coldest part of his refrigerator is and puts the most perishable foods there -- the milk, and cream, and other things, that are most likely to spoil in hot weather.

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MR. SALISBURY: How can you know where that coldest spot is?

MISS VAN DEMAN: It varies with the design of the refrigerator. Theoretically, it is where the cold air circulating around inside the box strikes first after it passes over the refrigerant, which may be the ice or the coils of the cooling unit.

MR. SALISBURY: Well, I suppose anybody could put a thermometer into a refrigerator and take temperatures in the different parts and locate the coldest spot.

MISS VAN DEMAN: It would be more accurate to use two thermometers at once and be sure beforehand that they register exactly alike.

MR. SALISBURY: And I imagine you have to read them quickly after you open the refrigerator door.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes, you do. Also speaking of the refrigerator door, here's a suggestion Miss Porter made. If your box has seen steady use for several years, the hinges or the latch may be loose, or the gasket around the door may be worn. That means that warm air is leaking in through the cracks.

MR. SALISBURY: Um-hum. Something a handy man around the house could do, tighten the hinges and maybe put a new gasket on the door.

MISS VAN DEMAN: That's the idea. And then it's up to everybody who uses the refrigerator not to open the door any more than necessary or leave it open a second longer than it takes to put food in and take food out.

Another thing, Miss Porter advised against crowding the refrigerator so full that the air can't circulate freely.

I know the tendency is in hot weather to get food into the refrigerator as rapidly as possible. Often this leads to putting it in wrappers and all, and to putting in fruits, like bananas, that are better off outside, or whole heads of lettuce, with the outer leaves that are thrown away later.

MR. SALISBURY: That's a rather extravagant way to use a refrigerator, isn't it?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes, it is. Because every dish, every paper, every particle of food that goes into a refrigerator carries with it a definite amount of heat. It takes ice or electric current to change that heat to cold in the refrigerator, and that means higher operating expense.

Miss Porter also mentioned that other rule for ice boxes - don't blanket the ice. The idea in a refrigerator is to keep food not ice. Also with many boxes, especially of the older type, it is more economical to keep the ice chamber well filled. If there is only a little lump of ice left, more ice must be melted to cool down the box again and the spoilage bacteria in the food have a chance to get busy in the meantime. After all, safe, sound food that doesn't risk the health is worth more than a few extra pounds of ice.

MR. SALISBURY: Very sound advice for the good old summertime, Ruth. Thank you, come again next week. We'll be looking for you next Thursday.